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DECORATION & FURNITURE

A MODEST LITTLE NEST.

WHAT MAY BE DONE WITH A CHEAP FLAT.



VERY plain flat is meant, on the top floor, with aggravations in the way of doors that are, and of closets that are not—with rough, uneven floors that do not take kindly to staining—and with the ugliest possible marble mantels.

The rooms are small—mere boxes in fact—and the people to occupy them are a young literary man and his wife with a taste for the beautiful, and a discouraging consciousness of inability to gratify it.

The ceilings are barely eight and a half feet from the floor; and the wood-work has a thin coat of white paint. The home-fairy groans over the closets, chiefly conspicuous by their absence; and the few that are present are exasperatingly small. The rent, however, is only \$30 a month; and the situation is not bad, and in some respects is exceedingly convenient. Besides, much house-hunting has reduced the couple to a state of meekness. They are disposed to be thankful for small mercies; so the flat is taken, in spite of defects, and the work of renovation is begun.

It is decided to ignore the word "artistic," to carry out no "scheme of color," and to let "culture" go where it pleases, in the praiseworthy effort to increase the apparent size of the small domain, and to make it as cheerful and habitable as possible.

"The landlord will do nothing," remarks the nominal head of the firm; "but he graciously permits us to make any reasonable improvements at our own expense."

"Then," replies the real head, which is royally crowned with gold, "let us bend our first efforts to these dreadful doors. There are actually *four* of them in this little room, and the parlor at that!"

"But look at the walls; that paper is enough to drive one wild."

"I have the walls and wood-work all arranged," says Mrs. Alice, confidently, "and I think you will like it, Harry. We cannot have either a dado or a frieze, you know, unless we wish to bring the ceiling directly on our heads; but I read somewhere lately of a 'pinky-gray' paper, and I am quite possessed with the idea. How will it do to paint the wood-work dull olive, and have the pinky-gray paper finished at the top with a narrow black molding, and under that just a line, perhaps, of dead gold? The ceiling might have the faintest flush of pink, if we can afford a ceiling at all."

"I think we can; for I propose staying here at least two years, and I believe in making the place habitable while we are in it. Let us go at once and investigate the paper and paint business; the rest can follow by degrees."

Fortunately, the boarding-house rooms could be retained until the flat was in living order; and therefore the nest-builders were able to do their work leisurely and well. The pinky-gray paper was found at a reasonable price, and so were a pot of paint and a shiftless sort of man, with a morbid appetite for odd jobs. It gave him a sense of freedom, as he explained, to know that his work would not take him long, and he did it all the

obnoxious doors. It will not even be necessary to paint them under this covering—the frames only need be treated to a coat of olive. In that way the crimson would have a particularly good effect; and the curtains might be made of the same inexpensive material."

The parlor was the room under consideration, and one of the numerous doors opened into a small front room that was to be partly library and partly boudoir—whatever any one chose to call it.

"That door is an advantage," remarked the gentleman, "and gives an idea of space. Some one has said, somewhere, that a small communicating room gives opportunity for an effective side view, and relieves the monotony of the four walls, from which there is no escape except by way of the door. It also gives a pleasant sense of freedom, in being able to enter at one door and pass out at another."

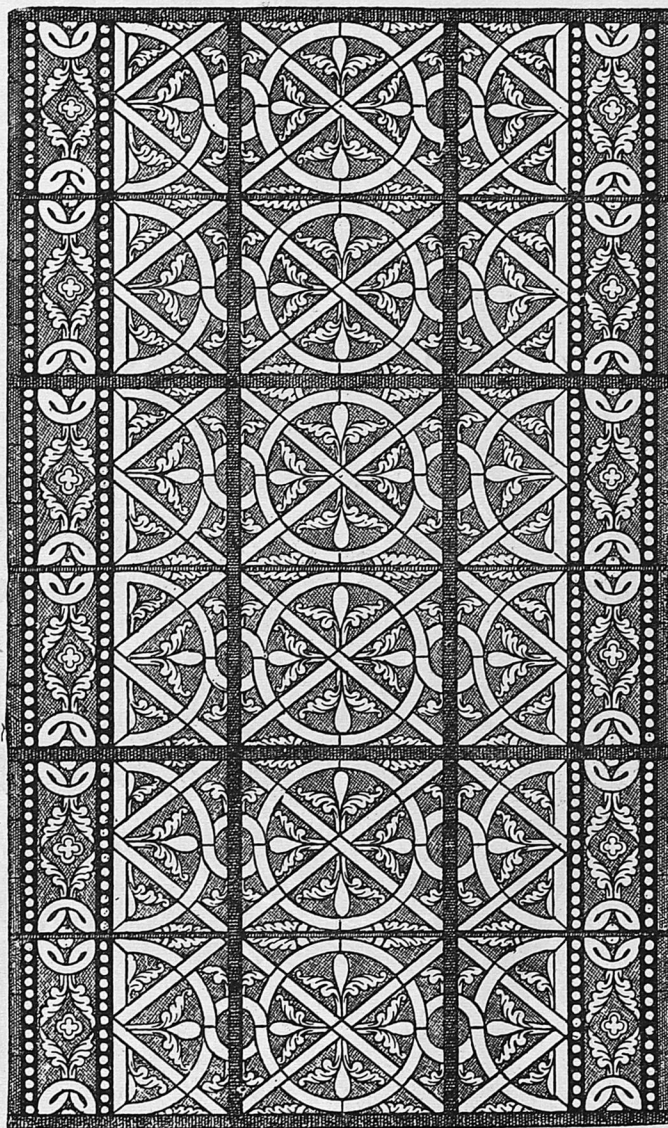
This idea won the lady's hearty approval; and after all she admitted, on reconsidering the matter, that perhaps the doors were not too numerous—it was only that they cut off too much wall space. Instead, too, of double doors between parlor and dining-room, as there should have been, there was only a single one, and on a line with it a similar door opening into a bedroom. Another bedroom—a very small one—was entered from the dining-room; and this, of course, should be the sleeping apartment for the one maid. A diminutive kitchen completed the domain; and if in no one room could the figurative process of swinging a cat be indulged in, there was all the less expense involved in furnishing.

A very cosy and pretty little nest was growing by degrees; and the heads of both builders were a kaleidoscopic confusion of "brilliant ideas." Mrs. Alice would pop in a "bit of color" among her quiet mate's straws and grasses at most unexpected periods; and somehow her additions always turned out to be improvements. The walls of the parlor and "annex"—as Harry rather provokingly called it—were done alike with dull olive-green wood-work and pinky-gray paper, the narrow cornice of black and a line of dead gold, and the ceiling with a faint blush of pink.

The dining-room—a pleasant, sunny little nook—was clothed in sage-green paper of small pattern and wood-work of dull Indian-red. The improvements did not go beyond these rooms; for, as the couple sensibly remarked, the others were not supposed to be visible to the naked eye of the public, and for their own gratification they had done as

much in that way as their means would warrant.

Next they consulted about the parlor floor; but it did not take long to decide that the best arrangement for the money would be a width of plain dark red matting all around in place of staining, and covering the edges of this a "Kensington Art-rug" in shades of golden-brown. The effect was very good; and so was that of the crimson cheese-cloth draperies at the windows, hung from a narrow black pole and tied back with ribbons to match

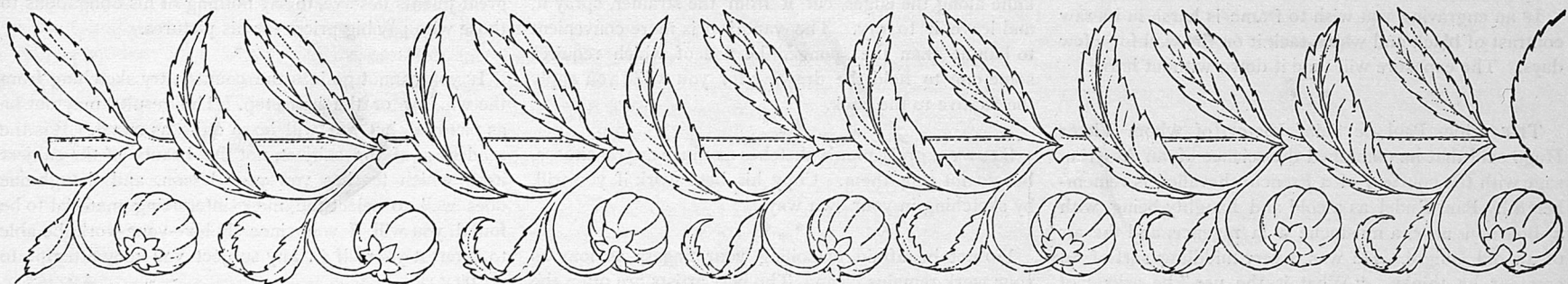


PAINTED GLASS WINDOW.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH WORK IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT JEAN AUX BOIS, NEAR COMPIEGNE.

better for this knowledge. While he worked and talked the doors were being thoroughly considered; and Mrs. Alice was very much pleased with a sudden inspiration that came to her, and which was imparted to Harry at the first opportunity.

"I have discovered that there is such a thing to be had as crimson cheese-cloth," she said, "at ten cents a yard; and I know of no law to prevent us from using the said cheese-cloth, gathered full at top and bottom, over the



the material. The shades beneath were of pale olive, trimmed at the edge with a cheap, effective lace.

The doors were a great success; and the young house-keeper's idea of hiding their ugliness with full folds of crimson cheese-cloth answered admirably. Of course, at the beginning her enthusiasm received such cold shocks as, "How will you ever open or close the door with all that stuff fastened on it?" "How can you avoid obliterating the door-knob and key-hole?" "What is to keep the thing from waving wildly in the breeze, and showing the bareness of the ground beneath?"

These difficulties were soon settled by a small ebony rod at top and bottom of the door, to which the cheese-cloth was fastened with brass rings like a very full curtain confined at each end; and a place was easily cut and turned in for the knob and key-hole. Only two of the doors, however, were treated in this way, the dining-room and library doors being furnished with portières made by the mistress of the house. Silk rags, woven into an Oriental-looking fabric, draped the door into the library very handsomely, and hung loose from the ebonized pole, to be drawn back or closed at pleasure. The dining-room door had quite an artistic hanging, copied in cheap material from a very costly model.

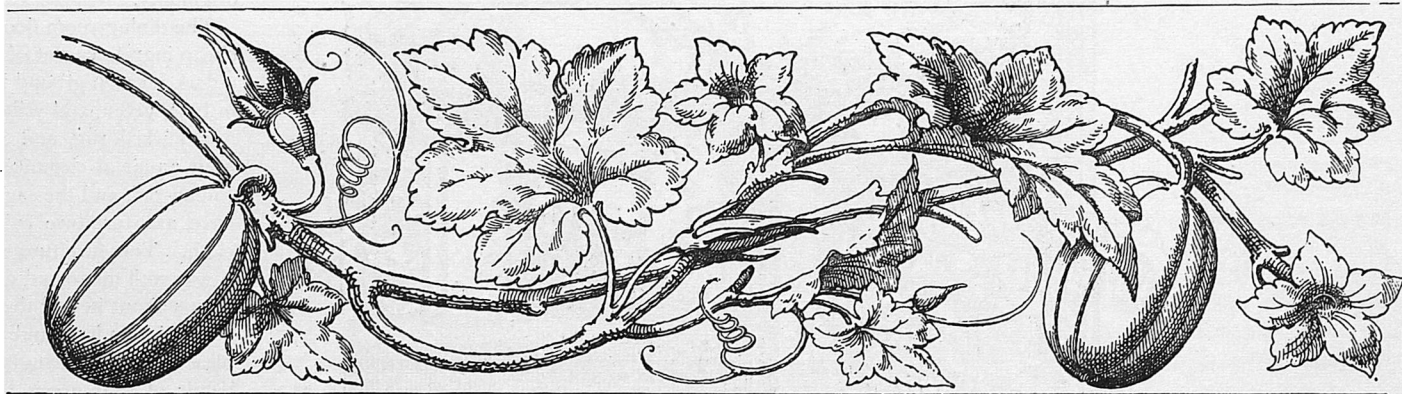
The fabric used was double-faced Canton flannel, or "fashion-drapery," and the colors were cream, terra-cotta, and salmon-pink. But the horizontal stripes in the model were changed to perpendicular ones to favor the low ceiling, and various devices in feather-stitch and blanket-stitch, loosely done with crewel and zephyr, made this novel portière a thing of beauty which every visitor of the feminine gender inspected with wonder and admiration.

That cold tombstone of a mantel must be buried out of sight; and, with the landlord's permission, it received two or three coats of terra-cotta paint, while the margin around the fire-place was covered with a strip of paper in a pattern of blue and white tiles. So natural was the effect that a visitor rarely suspected their real nature [a reprehensible sham!—ED. A. A.]; and a tall Japanese jar on the mantel repeated the blue coloring very pleasantly. There was also a yellow vase with reddish flowers on it, and between the two a very pretty, ebony-framed mirror with sconces, holding red candles.

The mantel-piece, which was now bright and attractive, was one of the most thorough transformations on the premises; and fortunately a small, old-fashioned "fire-frame"—which the literary man, who was always picking up things for a song, had found in some rubbish-den at an absurdly low price—allowed itself to be fitted into the chimney-place with a promise of doing its duty. The

"It is furniture enough almost in itself," they decided; "but as we can scarcely group ourselves and visitors, Indian fashion, on the floor, necessity seems to call for a sofa of some sort and a few well-meaning chairs."

completed that part of the furniture. Two ugly hassocks had been covered in such a way that they were pronounced beautiful; and there now seemed to be nothing to desire but a cabinet and some tables.



MOTIVE FOR FRIEZE OR BORDER DECORATION.

Mrs. Alice announced that a well-defined sofa had shaped itself in her ever-active brain and assumed the form of a bamboo lounge with red cushions. The combination had haunted her for some time past; it was picturesque, possibly artistic—for which they did not care—would "go well" with the silk-rag portière, and had a light effect particularly desirable in a small room.

"If you fondly imagine," remarked the financial part of the firm, "that this bamboo lounge is to be a cheap investment, it becomes my painful duty to inform you that you are laboring under a delusion. It will cost, probably twenty-five dollars without any cushions."



EGG DESIGN FOR BORDER.

"I supposed that such a thing could easily be bought for ten dollars," was the surprised reply; "but, after all, anything of a sofa would cost more than twenty-five, and I really think we cannot do better than the bamboo lounge."

"Just as you say," is the obliging response; but the speaker knows all the time that the cushions, which the lady has evidently forgotten, will add from five to ten dollars more to the expense.

The lounge was bought, of course, and was quite a charming affair when furnished with its crimson cushions in woollen damask. It had, besides, the distinction of being unlike other people's sofas. There was a large

Two small tables were bought and one moderate-sized one. The cabinet, a very pretty, ebonized affair, was the work of the master of the house, with the aid of a common carpenter; and it had the orthodox amount of drawers and doors, with plated handles and hinges. Its actual cost was five dollars; but it could not have been bought for less than five times that amount.

A few good etchings and engravings, in very simple frames, adorned the walls, and one or two really beautiful Japanese panels embroidered on silk. It was an exceptionally pretty room, at a very moderate expenditure; and the furniture in it was sufficient without being at all crowded.

The small room, dignified by the mistress with the name of library, had a floor covering of dark red matting, while close to the door was spread a white rug of Japanese goat-skin. A set of low shelves, which answered the purpose of a bookcase, nearly covered the opposite side of the room, and disclosed a small fortune in the shape of choice volumes. The shelves were only stained, and their edges trimmed with pinked-out leather and brass-headed nails; but they were quite as useful as solid walnut, and looked almost as well. A very cheerful-looking gray owl, bereft of everything natural but his skin and feathers, mounted guard in the centre of the long, flat top, that was covered with a strip of old-gold felt fringed with small cones. On either side of the owl stood a flat vase, pitcher-shaped, of the most beautiful malachite green; they had cost very little, yet had the look of something rich and rare.

A massive arm-chair of dark old mahogany, owned by somebody's great-grandmother, had also been found in the rubbish-den and bought for another "song." Its constitution had seemed entirely broken down, and the covering was in tatters; but the man who liked odd jobs took a fancy to the discouraging aspect of this one, and attacked it so violently that the chair was provided with a new lease of life, and looked stately and magnificent in the library window. The crimson damask of the sofa-

cushions made a very handsome covering; and the renewer of its youth seemed quite loath to leave it with its owners.

A large jar in one corner, of beautiful shape but inexpensive material, held Pampas plumes and graceful clusters of native grasses. There was just enough without turning the place into a hay-mow, as some do who seem actuated by the idea that if a few dried grasses are pretty, a great many must be far prettier.

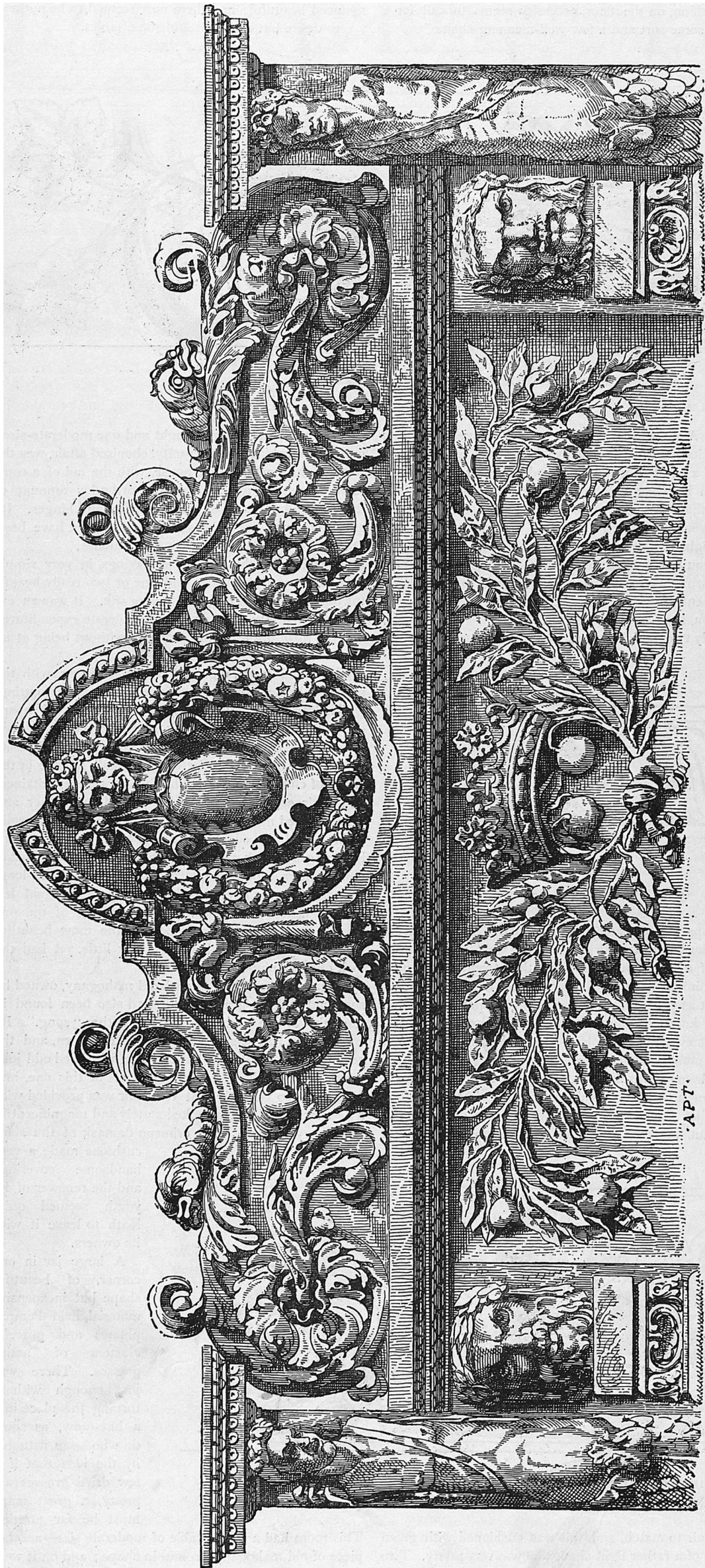


MOTIVE FOR FRIEZE OR BORDER DECORATION.

fitting, to be sure, cost twice as much as the thing itself; but its proprietors thought it wondrously cheap, as a whole, at fifteen dollars, and fairly revelled in the cheery blaze of their wood fire, reflected in the little andirons.

arm-chair to match, and this was cushioned with green velours of a rather light shade that was very pretty. Two light, ebonized chairs, with solid straw bottoms, and a low arm-chair covered with a rich-looking, mixed fabric,

This room had a centre-table of moderate size—another piece of old mahogany—round in shape; and on it were always to be found the choicest of the new books in a handsomely-carved rack, and the latest magazines.



FRENCH WOOD-CARVING. DETAILS OF A STATE BED OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

The curtains to the one window were of Japanese chintz in gold color, and the gold figures had a very lustrous effect. Altogether, the room was quite unique; and Mrs. Alice was proud of having evolved it out of her own inner consciousness. The view from the parlor was very good, as it had a general air of brightness and originality.

The dining-room floor was thoroughly covered with a cheap ingrain carpet of admirable pattern and coloring; a dark maroon ground had small, Oriental figures on it in blue, green, and yellow, giving very much the effect of a Turkish rug, and investing the simple room with quite an air of elegance. With the wood-work of dull Indian-red, and the sage-green paper, it was decided to have ash furniture covered with terra-cotta enamelled cloth. This furniture was far from being elaborate, but it was well made and of graceful shape; there were no shams about it, and the ornamentation was confined to a few simple lines and ridges. The curtains were of unbleached muslin, hanging in soft, full folds, trimmed with bands of sage-green, terra-cotta, and dark red Canton flannel. This was another original design from Mrs. Alice; and she was so frankly delighted with the result of her work that the more practical half of the firm began to fear that little else would be done in the dining-room but to admire the curtains.

The ugliness of the chimney-piece was veiled with curtains and valances of sage-green momie cloth, the heat coming through a register in the centre, for which a clear space was left. On the mantel some pretty Japanese ware in dark red and black and gold relieved the green; and the little buffet was bright with china and silver that had come in the shape of wedding-presents. There were dainty devices, too, in the way of embroidered linen covers, which had grown gradually during a year of boarding-house leisure; and the cover for the dining-table when off duty was of terra-cotta Canton flannel, with a border of sage-green. A couple of exceptionally pretty Japanese brackets, in black, red and gold, held graceful pitchers of amber glass on either side of the buffet; and the only wall ornaments beside were a fine engraving over the mantel and a few good lithographs.

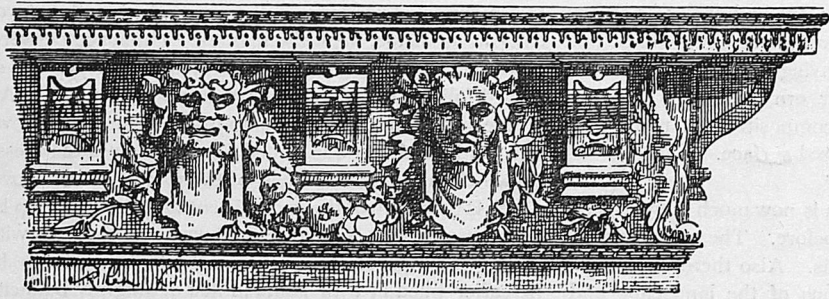
When the march of improvement reached the bedroom the mistress of the domain felt that here her decisive battle was to be fought. The powers to be contended with were want of space, want of closets, want of windows, and that hopeless white paint so thinly administered that it was like a transparent veil over the wood-work.

The prevailing tone of the upholstery was to be blue; therefore, for the floor-covering as yellow a piece of straw matting as could be obtained was put down for a bordering, and for the centre a Kensington rug of small pattern in two or three shades of brown. A suit of painted furniture, bought at the factory in its first stage and finished according to order, was colored a pale blue, and decorated with clusters of daisies. The work was very well done, and the shapes were good; while an outlay of thirty dollars for bed, bureau, washstand, chairs and small table, could not be considered exorbitant.

The one window—which was only half a window at that—did not require much curtaining; and all that it had was some figured cottage-drapery tied back with blue ribbons. A toilet-table, if out of date, is often very convenient; and having obtained a properly made frame from the carpenter, with an infinity of shelves underneath, the lady proceeded to cover it with blue muslin and more of the cottage-drapery. When finished with a small mirror, the frame of which had been painted blue, it was a very ornamental piece of furniture. This, however, was not its reason for being, and the shelves underneath were speedily filled with necessary conveniences. The one contracted closet—the shelf and hooks of which had apparently been arranged for the accommodation of giraffes—was given up entirely to the master to work his sweet will therein in the way of unlimited boots and disorganized garments; while the mistress contented herself with the toilet-table, most of the bureau, the parlor closet, and various boxes and bags. Being accustomed, however, to impositions of this kind, the defrauded partner felt it to be a very liberal arrangement.

"Things are not what they seem," remarked Mrs. Alice, pointing out two innocent-looking ottomans covered with light blue Canton flannel, the tops of which opened with hinges, and displayed most convenient receptacles for soiled clothes. Wonderful bags, too, that appeared to be intended only for ornament, were suspended wherever there was a place for them, and proved on examination to be filled with most prosaic contents. The

doors were nearly covered with rows of deep pockets on a flat foundation—all made of pretty cretonne, and neatly bound with worsted braid—and these held stockings, underclothing, working-materials, boots and slippers—everything, in fact, that could be put into pockets.



FRENCH WOOD-CARVING.

DETAIL OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY BED.

A cheap little cabinet made of yellow pine was fastened on the wall, and accommodated an infinity of bottles, and all the other odds and ends of a sleeping room usually bestowed in capacious closets. Two or three brackets, equally inexpensive, were also made useful, and a couple of small shelves started into being over the washstand. Not an inch of room seemed to be wasted; and that bedroom displayed the very science of management in a contracted space. It was really astonishing how many conveniences were found where none had appeared to exist.

Every one admired the flat; it was so different, they said, from any other, and ever so much prettier than many high-priced ones. Only a favored few knew just what it had cost to make those plain little rooms attractive, and they refused to believe that any one else could do it on an expenditure of less than five hundred dollars.

ELLA RODMAN CHURCH.

AT a recent "conference" in London on "Interior Decoration," G. C. Haité said: "Whatever may be the force of the arguments used in support of figures and pictorial representation on the ceilings of public buildings or reception rooms, they can have little, if any, weight when applied to domestic decorations; for the one quality of all others most desirable in our homes is surely comfort and repose, neither of which would be possible if we were compelled to pass so many hours of each day overshadowed by a picture literally face down. I am opposed to the use of the figure or pictorial representations in such positions, not only because the dignity of the human form is destroyed, but because such decoration must be always a disturbing element, and altogether, in its incongruity, opposed to the best principles of decoration. Of course such objections are not nearly so strong when the figure is used for the embellishment of a cupola, or domed or curved ceilings, because in such positions the design is always to be seen right side up from any point of view." There was, he thought, no inexpensive decoration for a ceiling so satisfactory in its results as raised flock paper. He said that if the public only understood the value of a decorated ceiling, and the air of completeness it gives to a scheme of decoration, much of the inconsistent antipathy to the ceiling being aught but white would be removed, and its embellishment would be accepted, not as an increased item of luxury and unnecessary expense, but as a necessity.

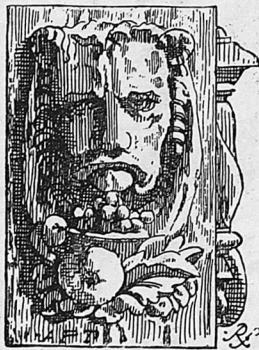
THE WORK OF THE DECORATOR.

THE first thought of the decorator should be the "ensemble" of a room. He should make up his mind at the beginning (and often his first impression on this point is the most valuable) which are the features that demand or deserve consideration, which are the defects that must at all cost be corrected. "We find comparatively few rooms," says Lewis F. Day, "that can be said to have much character of their own. It is seldom, therefore, that we have to consider whether that character deserves to be emphasized or toned down. But there is nearly always something in a room which, to the experienced decorator, suggests, almost at first sight, its treatment. His first note is with regard to the lighting of the room,

for upon that will depend the tone of his color. Then as to proportion: is it too high, too long, too low, too anything? It is almost certain to be too something; and the long length has to be broken by upright lines, the low ceiling made to retire, the bare space broken up

pleasantly. Beyond this various constructional features will probably appear to want connection, and it will be the care of the decorator to bring them together. Going still farther into detail, he will observe, perhaps, that the plaster enrichments of the ceiling are coarse, and need to be as much as possible subdued by judicious color, and perhaps even hidden amidst painted ornament of better character,

which shall withdraw the attention from them. Or he will see that the pilasters appear to want relief, and must be brought away from the wall by a contrast of



FRENCH WOOD-CARVING.

DETAIL OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY BED.

tone if they are to look as if they really supported the cornice. In the cove of the cornice he will feel, very likely, the urgent need of perpendicular lines of some kind to break the too horizontal tendency of this feature. Where arches occur the chances are there will be awkward spandrels to deal with, where some strongly-defined forms of ornament are needed to divert

the eye from their ill-considered shapes. In short, any foregone preference for dado, high or low, for frieze, for a panelled arrangement, or whatever it may be, will in most cases go for very little. Fancy will have to give way before the facts of the case. The art of the decorator finds its scope less in the invention of beautiful forms than in the solution of difficult problems."

A NEW kind of mirror-painting has been invented by a Mr. Lloyd, of London, who applies the decoration to the back of a glass—i. e., the side that is to be silvered. By a process of his own, the colors are made permanent and capable of resisting the decomposing action of the amalgam. The disadvantage of having the object painted show double is obviated by painting the design on the back of the glass instead of the face.

OLIVE green felt is being introduced, with good effect, for covering the walls of picture galleries.

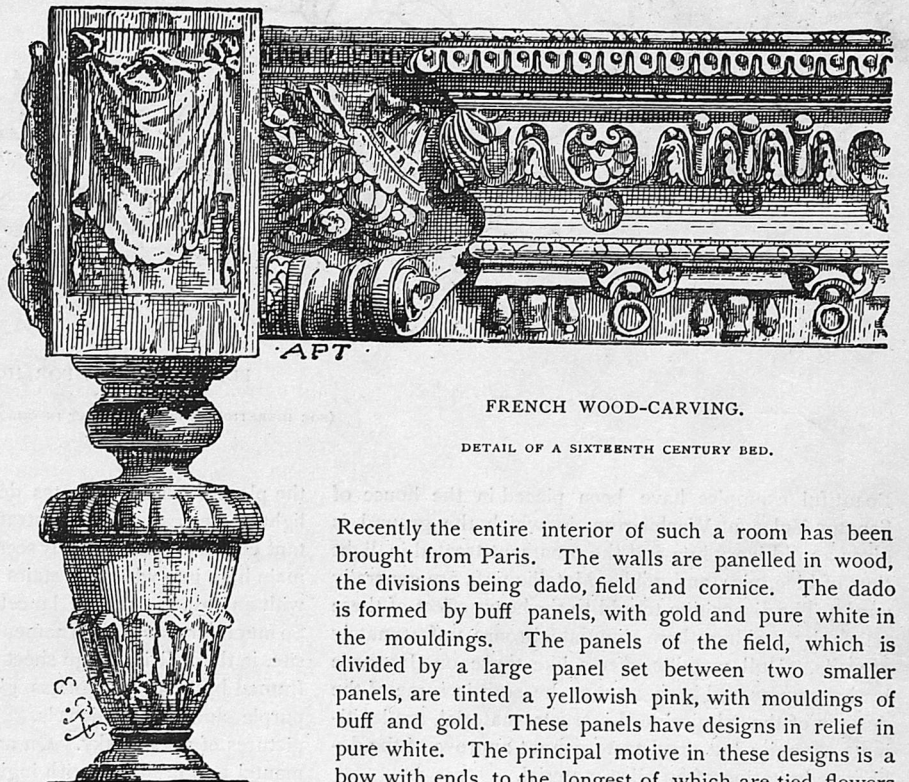
Notes on Decoration.

A CLEVER architect has recently made a happy adaptation of the Italian loggia to modern needs. This is in a seaside villa looking landward, and serves as a breakfast-room. The entrance is through the dining-room, which makes the longest line in an irregular hexagon. Each of the shorter lines has an opening screened by awnings, and below the brick is set to allow for ornamental perforations. The floor is tiled with brick, and the walls are left untreated. This prevailing red is varied by window boxes of flowers. While insuring privacy, the loggia still allows for the sense of being out-of-doors.

THE very common introduction of elevators is producing a notable change in domestic life. In one of the handsomest houses now building on upper Fifth Avenue the two lower floors are given up to formal apartments. On the second floor is a drawing-room forty feet long, connecting with a music and dancing-room, the two combined giving to festal occasions a magnificent apartment eighty feet long. To the third story lead two steam elevators. Here begin the living rooms, the library, sitting-room and private dining-room, with butler's pantry, and all the attachments complete. Above are the chambers. As the house looks on the park, the fortunate occupants command a view of the trees and lawn, as well as of the pageant of the clouds and the purer air for breathing purposes.

HOW few architects succeed in making anything of a porte cochère but an excrescence! It is either the "enfant terrible" of architecture, refusing to be brought into line, or has the appearance of a steam-tug towing the house after it. A notable exception is seen in that of a new villa at Seabright. Here the porte cochère makes part of the lines of the house, the columns being made strong enough to support the upper story. One enters the vestibule by a short flight of steps underneath the porte cochère, and on this level is a brick floor which defines the sweep of the drive, a very pretty arrangement of lines. This sheltered spot makes a favorite family rendezvous where easy-chairs are brought, and great blue Chinese pots holding plants are backed against the red walls, with an outlook on a broad sweep of lawn.

THERE is a great field for designers in the ornament which accompanies the Louis XVI. styles now popular.



FRENCH WOOD-CARVING.

DETAIL OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY BED.

Recently the entire interior of such a room has been brought from Paris. The walls are panelled in wood, the divisions being dado, field and cornice. The dado is formed by buff panels, with gold and pure white in the mouldings. The panels of the field, which is divided by a large panel set between two smaller panels, are tinted a yellowish pink, with mouldings of buff and gold. These panels have designs in relief in pure white. The principal motive in these designs is a bow with ends, to the longest of which are tied flowers surrounding baskets of fruit, harps, tambourines and garden implements. There is, for example, a wicker basket filled with fruit; a tambourine hangs at its side, a little shovel and rake make projecting lines, and about these are light flowers and foliage against the pink ground. Each panel is different and each equally light, graceful and elegant. There is a fine field for reproducing such designs, but also a fine field for doing something original and